



## The Pomposa building complex

Along the seaside route called *Via Romea* stands the Abbey of the Po river Delta: Pomposa. It is a masterpiece of Romanesque art and it stood as a world-renowned center for spirituality and culture during the Middle Ages. The first written records attesting the existence of this monastery date back to 874 CE. However, the settlement of monks in this area may be even older, dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> century.

The 11<sup>th</sup> century marked an economic and cultural flourish for this site. This was due, among other things, to the actions of Abbot Guido. After the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Este family in Ferrara expanded their reach to Pomposa. However, the Abbey maintained a certain autonomy: this is attested by the church frescos, commissioned by Abbot Andrea to Vitale da Bologna (first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century).

The House Este only obtained full control over the site in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This marked the beginning of the decline of the site that caused the progressive abandonment of the area. Outbreaks of malaria further contributed to the depopulation.

In 1663, the monastery of Pomposa was suppressed and the church downgraded to simple parish. Following the suppression of monastic orders by Napoleon and the seizure of church assets from 1802, the monastery of Pomposa was sold via auction and purchased by the noble family Guiccioli, from Ravenna. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, thanks for the intervention of the State and several major enhancement interventions, the complex was perfectly restored and it is available for fruition by the public.

Three main cores make up the extraordinary architecture of the complex: the bell tower with the *Chiesa di Santa Maria* (Saint Mary Church) and its entrance, the cloister and pertaining area and the *Palazzo della Ragione*.

